

FireFighter

The magazine of the Fire Brigades Union www.fbu.org.uk

October 2012

**HANDS OFF
OUR PENSIONS**

**STOP THE
SQUEEZE ON
PAY**

**DEFEND ALL
JOBS**

Why firefighters will be
demonstrating on 20 October
See p10





Matt Wrack

Now is the time to act for our service

Stand up for our service

The next two months will be crucial for the future of the fire and rescue service. On 5 December the Westminster government's autumn statement will signal its spending plans for the next two years.

We already know the mess the government has made of the economy. We know the coalition is borrowing more than it planned. We know that

its spending cuts so far have kept the economy in recession. As a result, the government is under pressure to change course.

Firefighters can help make them change direction.

Job cuts

This edition of *Firefighter* contains FBU research on job cuts for the first year of government spending cuts. Our research has found that in the first year of the local government settlement – from April 2011 to March 2012 – nearly 1,500 firefighter jobs were lost across the UK.

There are over 900 fewer wholetime firefighters than last year. Nearly 400 retained jobs have been lost. And over 130 control staff have gone – 7% of the total control jobs.

Only Northern Ireland and London have more firefighters.

Some 700 support jobs have been axed. But two-thirds of the cuts in the service have hit the frontline.

More cuts are taking place this year. But the Westminster

government has not yet decided on spending on the fire and rescue service from April of next year. The Fire Brigades Union is organising at every level to get our message across: No more cuts. The union wants every member and every official to speak up for the service.

Our service has been cut to the bone. We suffered cuts under the last government. And we will face further cuts unless we can get through to politicians. We need to make them listen. We know that more people will die and more people will be injured if our service is cut.

The risks

More people will die in fires, in floods, in road traffic accidents and other incidents we deal with. More people will face terrible injuries from fires. More homes and workplaces will be ruined. Insurance costs

will go up. The fire service will not have the resources to deal with terrorism, or another Buncefield, or wildfires. None of this makes sense.

Even some chief officers have woken up to the scale of the cuts.

The English metropolitan authorities' fire chiefs have said over 2,500 wholetime and nearly 100 retained jobs could go. Some 31 fire stations could be earmarked for closure.

Unfortunately these chief officers are asking the Westminster government to take money from combined and county fire services and pass it to them.

The FBU does not accept this divisive approach. Our service as a whole does not warrant cuts. Squabbling over the slice of cake is not the answer.

We need investment in the service to maintain and improve our high standards.

Act now

These cuts would be devastating – for our members and for the public. We have to stop the rot this year. We have to fight to save our fire and rescue service. We are fighting for our jobs and for our service. We have a window of opportunity to campaign this year.

Every member can speak to their MP, local councillor or other elected official and put forward our view. Politicians tell us they will listen. We know from previous experience that firefighters are incredibly persuasive and convincing. If FBU members take action now, we have a big opportunity to influence governments.

Solidarity

FBU officials took our arguments to the TUC congress in September and received overwhelming support. We will get the solidarity that only the trade union movement can provide. We know our communities want and respect the fire and rescue service. But firefighters have to take the lead in defending our service.

We have to get out and about and show everyone that our service is a service to be proud of – and one worth defending.

We want as many members as possible to join the TUC demonstrations on Saturday 20 October. The FBU will also lobby Westminster on 7 November. Dozens of local lobbies and rallies are planned. There has never been a more important time to get involved.



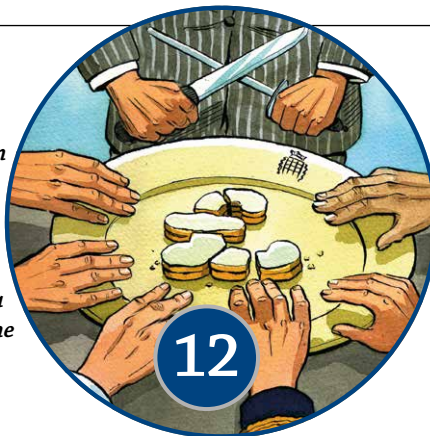
The FBU delegation at this year's TUC congress in Brighton

ANDREW WARD

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Metropolitan authority chief officers want more of the funding cake – not a bigger one



TUC Congress delegates backed the FBU's call for banks to be taken into public ownership (page 6). Read why this is necessary on page 14



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The news they don’t want you to hear

Glyn O’Brien, of brave watch in Armagh, will be competing in the World Police and Fire Games in Belfast





Essex firefighters protest against cuts. Strikes planned for September were postponed as talks entered a crucial phase

‘Irresponsible beyond belief’

West Yorkshire

West Yorkshire fire authority proposals to close more fire stations and to get rid of more fire engines and firefighters will, on top of draconian cuts last year, put residents’ and firefighters’ lives at risk, the Fire Brigades Union has warned.

David Williams, FBU’s West Yorkshire brigade secretary, said: “These cuts will slow response times, and in fire-fighting, seconds count.

“A few seconds delay can be the difference between saving a life and failing to save it.”

Last year the fire authority decided to close 10 fire stations (and build just five new ones), get rid of seven frontline fire

appliances and reduce the number of operational firefighters by 135.

The effects of these cuts have not yet been felt. Nonetheless, this year the fire authority has proposed further cuts:

- a further 11 station closures (building just five new ones)
- loss of a further 12 frontline appliances
- the loss of 250 operational firefighters.

This, if it is agreed, will mean 19 fewer fire appliances available for an immediate response to an emergency and a loss of one in five operational firefighters.

David Williams said: “After last year’s announcement of station closures they’ve planned over the next few years, firefighters across the county raised concerns for the safety of our communities and that of firefighters responding to emergencies.

“To propose further station closures and the loss of a further 250 frontline emergency firefighters is irresponsible beyond belief.

“Firefighters are members of these communities too and they know the impact these proposals will make if they are approved by the fire authority next week.

“Closing two fire stations and then building a new one to cover both station grounds means that fire crews will face longer journeys to arrive at emergency incidents, and longer response times will cost lives.

“We’ve already seen a significant increase in attendance times for the first appliance arriving from five minutes 41 seconds to at least seven minutes.”

Paul
Cockburn:
We have to
sound the
alarm now



Officials prepare case to put to MPs

Westminster

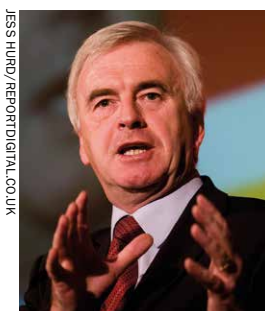
Fire Brigades Union representatives kicked off an intensive period of political engagement at Westminster last month, attending debates and meeting MPs.

The union is stepping up its campaign to defend the fire and rescue service.

FBU national officer Dave Green, who is organising the campaign, said: "The next few months will be crucial to the future of the fire and rescue service. We need to explain to MPs and other locally elected representatives that if they cut the fire and rescue service any further, then people will die as a result."

"The service is at breaking point. The public rightly expects a rapid response to every emergency and firefighters stand ready to intervene. However, without the right number of staff, appliances and equipment, our capability to intervene will degrade. Now is the time to stand up for the fire and rescue service."

FBU officials met John McDonnell MP, the secretary of the union's parliamentary group, to discuss how the Westminster



JESS HURD/REPORTAGE.CO.UK

MPs are
listening:
FBU
parliamentary
group
secretary
John
McDonnell

parliament works. They also heard MPs debate the future of fire service funding on 5 September.

During the debate Lib-Dem MP John Hemming warned: "We are going to face austerity for some time beyond the next general election and possibly into the 2020s."

It was clear from the debate that some MPs had listened to the FBU voices within the fire and rescue service.

Dave Green said: "What we need is for members to contact their MP and explain why further cuts are wrong. We need to tell them: No more cuts."

Council demands yet more cuts

West Sussex

Frontline fire and rescue services across West Sussex are in danger of being axed due to drastic spending cuts, the Fire Brigades Union has warned.

Less than two years after "efficiency savings" saw RDS firefighters made redundant and stations close, West Sussex County Council is demanding further savings.

West Sussex FBU brigade chair Mick Cambers

said: "Cuts on this scale will increase the times that firefighters take to attend emergency incidents."

"This will endanger members of the public involved in an incident and put firefighters attending such emergencies at greater risk."

"Fire appliances carry the phrase 'Making West Sussex Safer'. If these savage cuts go ahead that commitment will be severely affected."

A reduction in the grant

from the government, combined with a freeze on council tax increases, has affected every department of the council. The fire service has to find £2.5 million in savings from its budget, despite claims by the prime minister that frontline services will not be cut.

Cambers said: "Public consultation is now in progress. The union has serious concerns at how low profile and vague this process seems."

SOUNDING OFF

West Midlands FBU brigade secretary Paul Cockburn explains why members should join the TUC demonstration on 20 October

There has never been a more important time to campaign for public services and that is why I will be marching with my family on Saturday 20 October.

The fire and rescue service is under attack as never before. The Westminster government slashed over 1,500 frontline firefighter jobs last year, to add to the thousand it cut the year before. More cuts are going through this year and it is time for firefighters to say: Enough is enough.

This autumn the Westminster government makes its big decisions on central funding. This will then knock on to local fire service budgets. Firefighters have an opportunity to make their case for the fire and rescue service, for our jobs and our communities.

This is a one-off chance to influence the powers that be. If hundreds of firefighters tell MPs, councillors and fire authorities or board members what is at stake, we can convince them to fund our service properly.

If we can speak to them face to face, lobby them, write to them, go to their surgeries and meetings, we can defend ourselves and the public. If we do not, the fire and rescue service as we know it is in mortal danger. We have to sound the alarm now.

Hundreds of thousands of trade unionists will be demonstrating to defend public services on 20 October. There is a big march in London, as well as another demonstration in Glasgow. Every FBU member and their family should attend. Our future is at stake.



Trade unions pledge support for firefighters in battles ahead

Government cuts

Trade unionists from every sector of the economy have offered their support to the FBU's campaign to defend firefighters and the fire and rescue service from government cuts.

Delegates at the TUC Congress last month voted unanimously for an FBU motion to stop the cuts to the fire and rescue service. Many understood from their own experience the importance of the service to their own jobs and communities.

FBU general secretary Matt

Wrack told Congress about the 1,500 firefighter jobs lost in the last year. Chief officers planned to cut even more.

He said: "More people will be at risk, more people will be injured and more people will die unless we stop these cuts."

Wrack explained that the FBU is mounting a robust campaign to defend firefighter jobs and the fire and rescue service.

Firefighters would be lobbying politicians nationally and locally in the coming weeks to secure decent funding for the service.



Matt Wrack: People will die unless we stop these cuts

BACKING FOR FBU CALL FOR BANKS TO BE PUBLICLY OWNED

TUC Congress voted for the first time for the public ownership of the banking system, after the FBU moved a resolution demanding our money back from the bankers.

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack said: "We've concluded that the failure of the banks is not simply about regulation, or lack of regulation. Not just shareholder ownership, but private ownership of the banks. We think the answer is for public ownership and democratic control of the banks."

Wrack told Congress that public ownership was the best way to put an end to the casino culture of the banks, the excessive pay and bonuses of top bankers and to secure the investment needed for economic recovery.

He said that such a takeover had to be in consultation with bank workers – but it was in the interests of all working people that the banks worked as a public service.

'Austerity for years' warning



Rose Jones: Mobilise for demonstrations

Fight for the future

The Westminster government's austerity plans could go on for years unless we stop them, unions warned at Congress.

FBU executive council member Rose Jones told delegates that in a recent fire service debate at Westminster, Liberal Democrat MP John Hemming had said austerity would last "beyond the next general election and possibly into the 2020s".

Jones urged delegates to mobilise for the lobby of Tory party conference in Birmingham on 7 October

and the TUC demonstrations in London and Glasgow on 20 October.

She said unions should support all workers in struggle, commending FBU members in Essex for the "magnificent" defence of their jobs and the service. Unions should stand in solidarity with cleaners from the East Coast mainline train company who were taking strike action for a living wage.

Jones also argued that workers should unite locally around trades council campaigns to defend the NHS, protect our schools and the welfare state.

Our health and safety must be defended

Safety is a right

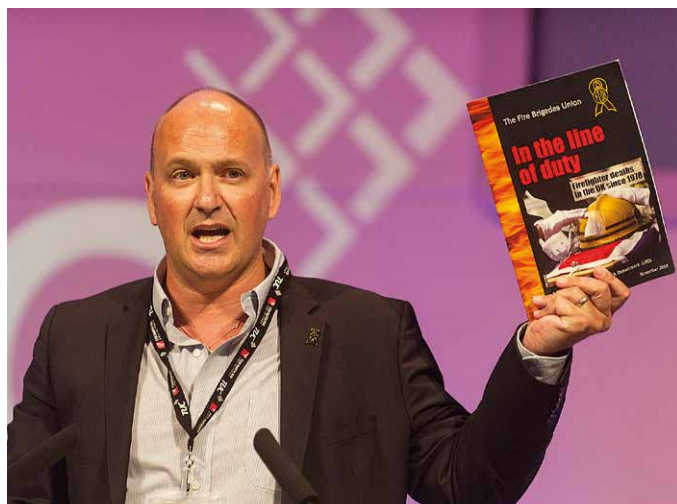
The FBU and other unions voted to defend workplace health and safety as the Con-Dem government launches yet another assault on workers' rights.

FBU executive council member Tam McFarlane told Congress that health and safety was not "unnecessary red tape" or a "burden on business". "Unions will stand up for health and safety. No worker, in any

industry, goes to work to die," he said.

McFarlane said 29 firefighters had been killed in the line of duty over the last decade, an "alarming upturn" coinciding with the drive to fragment the fire and rescue service.

The FBU had tried to learn the lessons from these fatalities, but government lacked the central policy drive and had failed even to issue substantial guidance, he said.



Tam McFarlane: Alarming upturn in firefighter fatalities

PICTURES: ANDREW WARD



JESS HURD/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

Trade unionists assemble at Westminster to demand pensions justice

FBU control members say new pension scheme unacceptable

Pensions

FBU control members have voted overwhelmingly to reject the Westminster government's proposals for a new local government pension scheme (LGPS). The union consulted members in August and 90% decided the new scheme was unacceptable.

In May this year the FBU was given the proposals for the 2014 LGPS for England and Wales, following the negotiations that had taken place between the employers and the trade unions involved (represented by Unite, Unison and GMB).

The FBU's executive council considered the proposals and recognised the improved position, particularly relating to the contributions, which addressed some of their earlier concerns.

However two key areas of concern remain in the proposals.

First, by linking the normal pension age (NPA) to the state pension age from 2014, members will have to work beyond 65, with some expected to work to 68. This is both unrealistic and unworkable for the majority

of FBU members working in fire control, because of shift work and the stressful and demanding nature of the job.

Second, the revaluation and accrual rates agreed for the career average (CARE) scheme. The link between the accrual rate and the revaluation of pensions should take account of length of service and the impact of inflation.

Although the accrual rate of 1/49ths is better than before (1/60ths), it is only achieved by worsening the revaluation rate. FBU members in control normally tend to have lengthy careers.

The FBU's professional advice from our actuarial consultants shows that the earlier

proposal with an accrual rate of 1/60ths linked with a revaluation rate of average weekly earnings would have produced a better return over the last 45 years than this new proposal which uses a better accrual rate (1/49ths) but a worse revaluation rate (CPI).

The FBU is very concerned that this proposal (1/49ths accrual and CPI revaluation) does not reflect the best outcome for our LGPS members. For these reasons, the FBU's executive council recommended members reject the 2014 proposals.

FBU members also said they would like the union to try and gain access for them into a specific fire service pension scheme. FBU officials met with CLG representatives on 6 September to discuss options whereby FBU members in fire control could access such a pension scheme.

Sean Starbuck, FBU national officer, said: "Members overwhelmingly expressed their views on the 2014 proposals and their willingness for us to pursue this fire service scheme option with CLG. There are no guarantees but we know what we have to do to make a strong case and we are preparing the ground."

Members would have to work beyond 65, with some expected to work to 68. This is both unrealistic and unworkable



Flood funding denied

DAVE GREEN, FBU national officer, criticises Westminster government inaction on flood response

The Fire Brigades Union has attacked the Westminster government's decision to risk public safety in England and Wales by refusing to require fire and rescue services to respond to flood emergencies, despite one of the wettest summers on record.

Firefighters carried out scores of rescues and protected vital national infrastructure

during major flooding this year. Although the fire service routinely responds to major floods, it is not mandated to do so by law in England and Wales. This means that funding for firefighters and the specialist equipment needed is not guaranteed and has to be found within existing budgets.

Exercise Watermark, the flood rescue

exercise in 2011, showed that the fire and rescue service does not have enough firefighters, boats and equipment needed to respond to flooding over prolonged periods.

However the Westminster government has concluded that placing a statutory duty on the fire and rescue service to respond

August 2012:
Flooding caused
the entire side of a
house in Egremont,
Cumbria, to fall into
the River Ehen

RICHARD RAYNER/
NORTH NEWS AND PICTURES



to flooding “is not the best way forward at this time”.

The FBU fears that the public will be put at risk because fire authorities will not have the resources to respond to flooding, particularly in the context of massive cuts to the fire and rescue service.

Government reports show that flood

risk has increased and is increasing. Flood defences can help, but there will always be extreme weather that requires emergency intervention.

We call on the government to make sure the public enjoys the protection of a properly equipped fire and rescue service.

The public rightly expects firefighters

to respond to floods and the government needs to recognise this in order to ensure that the public are protected.

Firefighters in Scotland and Northern Ireland are bound by law to deal with the effects of major flooding, but governments in England and Wales have failed to follow suit.



The Fire Brigades Union can reveal the real cost of government cuts on the fire and rescue service, after our research found almost 1,500 frontline firefighter posts have been cut over the last year.

The real effects of government austerity on the fire and rescue service have come to light because of an FBU freedom of information request.

The union found that between April 2011 and March 2012, some 1,457 wholetime, retained and control firefighter jobs were axed across the UK.

These cuts were the first of a four-year Westminster government plan designed to reduce fire service budgets by 25%. Every duty system has been affected. Some 926 wholetime firefighter and almost 400 retained firefighter jobs have gone. Over 130 control jobs have been cut – 7% of all control jobs in 2011.

Most brigades hit

Metropolitan brigades have been hard hit. Greater Manchester is the worst affected, losing 143 wholetime jobs. Lancashire, Essex, Humberside, Nottinghamshire and South Wales have also suffered around 30 or more wholetime job losses. Support roles have also been hit, with 715 job losses.

Northern Ireland and London were the only regions

where firefighter jobs increased. At brigade level, there were small increases in Cornwall, Hereford & Worcester and Central Scotland.

Time to fight back

In December, the Westminster government will announce its next local government settlement – the amount of central funding it will provide to every fire and rescue service in the UK for 2013-15. The devolved administrations and local fire authorities/fire boards will then set their budgets.

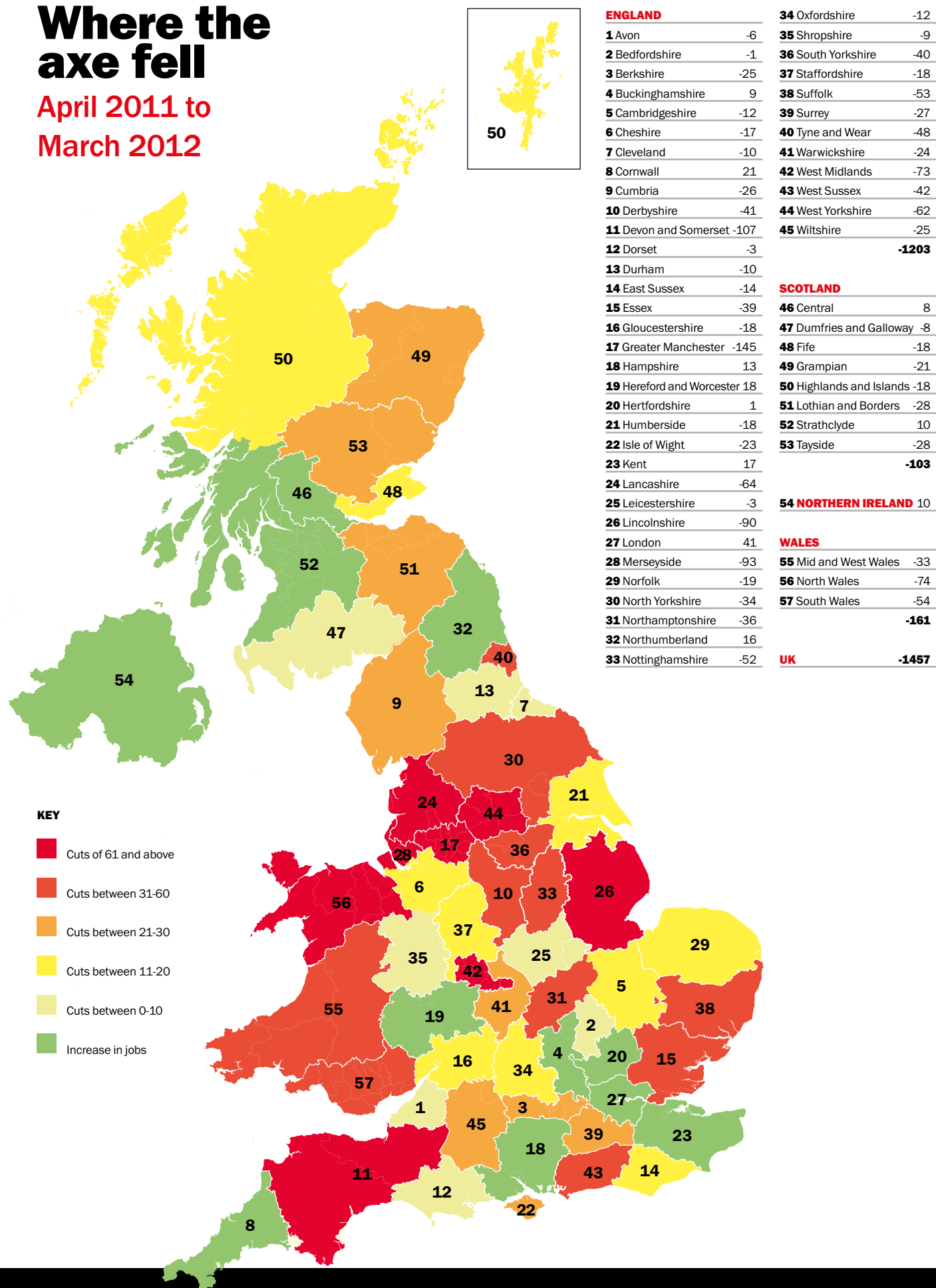
It is no exaggeration to say that the future of the fire and rescue service is at stake. The FBU is sounding the alarm. We need to stop the Westminster government before the public and firefighters are put at greater risk. People will die and face injuries that could have been prevented.

The FBU has told government that there is no room for cuts in the fire and rescue service and that cuts on the scale it proposes are simply not possible while maintaining any semblance of a modern and professional fire and rescue service.

We need every FBU member to take up the FBU campaign to challenge the cuts. The union wants members to take every opportunity this autumn to demonstrate, speak to MPs and other elected representatives and make the case for the fire and rescue service. Our jobs and public safety depend on it.

Where the axe fell

April 2011 to
March 2012



WHO SPEAKS FOR OUR SERVICE?

Principal managers from England's six metropolitan brigades lobbied MPs at Westminster. The FBU believes they messed up the opportunity to stand up for the fire and rescue service

When six chief fire officers and principal managers were granted an audience with MPs at Westminster on 16 July, many within the service might have expected them to make a robust case against cuts.

Instead, they celebrated cuts in fire and rescue services and did not call for increased funding.

At the House of Commons communities and local government select committee, which scrutinises the work of the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG), these senior figures from large city authorities called for a "flat cut", which would mean their own cuts would be less severe, but combined and county brigades would be cut even further.

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack said: "The select

committee hearing resulted in a missed opportunity and, worse, probably an own goal. It represented a narrow and selfish view, which does nothing to enhance an improvement in fire and rescue service funding. It creates a division within the English fire and rescue service as an entity."

Principal managers from the six metropolitan fire authorities (Greater Manchester, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear, West Midlands and West Yorkshire) have organised themselves as the Association of Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Authorities (AMFRA).

They produced a report for the select committee – *Potential Impact of the 2013-15 Finance Settlement* – that estimates the impact of cuts in their

brigades. It said that over 1,500 fire-fighter jobs had been lost in the six metropolitan brigades over the past ten years.

It made the valid point that, while other public services like health received large increases in funding during that period, fire and rescue service spending barely kept pace with inflation. However, the principal managers also accepted the government's cuts made in 2010.

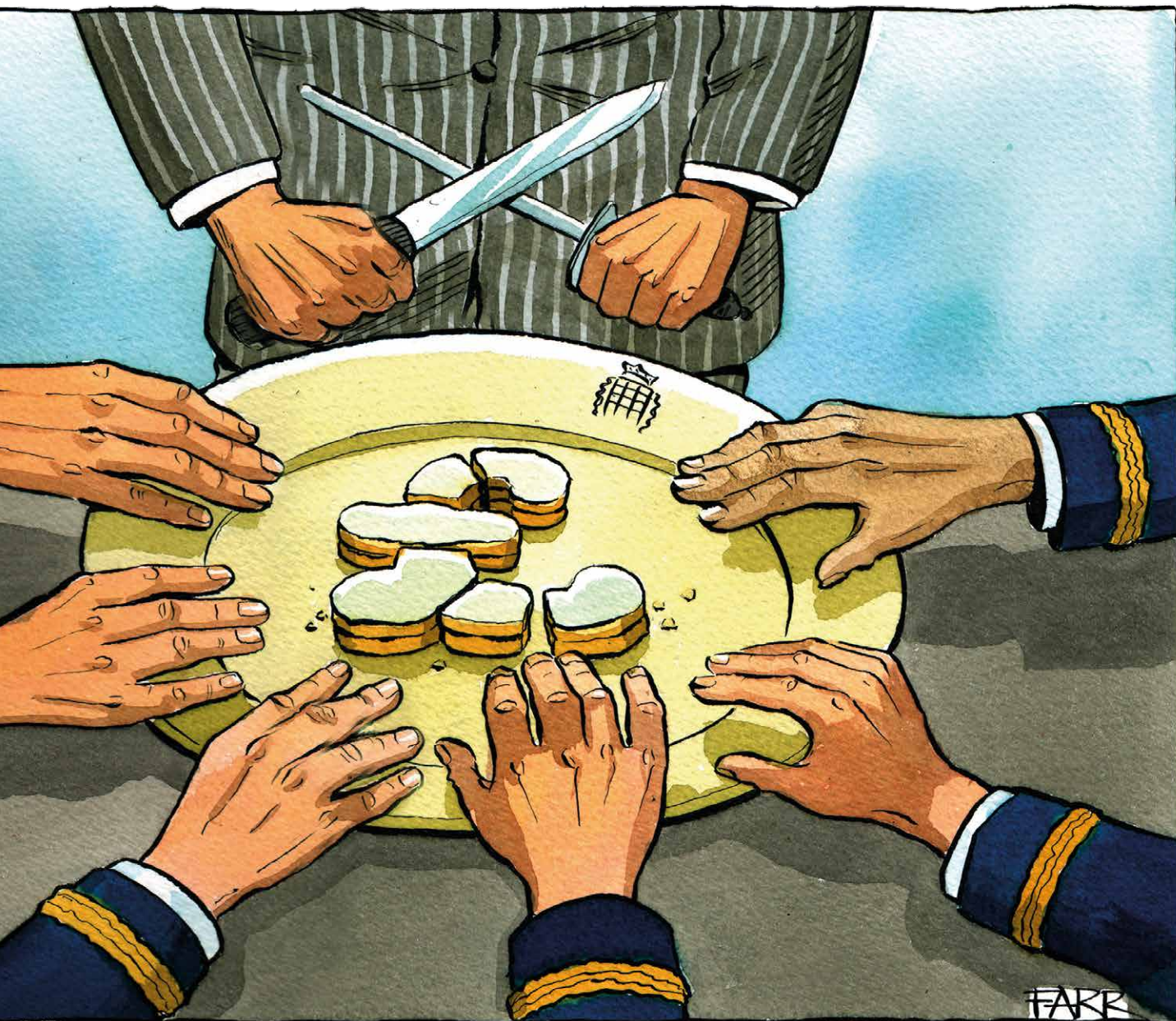
West Midlands chief officer Vijith Randeniya said in an opening presentation: "We understand the need for deficit reduction. We are not asking for any more funding. We are not asking to redress the financial distribution for years 1 and 2 of the comprehensive spending review; for us, that is water under the bridge."

The AMFRA report details the impact of cuts by 2015 in the six metropolitan brigades, if budgets were to be reduced by 13.5% and 27%. (see table)

In both cases, thousands of

Predicted cuts in English metropolitan FRSSs	Wholetime job losses	Retained job losses	Fire station closures
13.5%	1,583	69	11
27%	2,543.5	81	31





SIMON FARR

firefighters are cut and the service to the public diminished. With the worst-case scenario, the report warns: "Not only will the reductions in firefighters, pumps and stations be drastic, but we will no longer be able to use natural wastage and voluntary redundancies to make them."

Although the report warns of increased risks of damage to life and property, the principal managers were much more reticent in their testimony to MPs.

Matt Wrack said: "The principal managers made a fundamental error in refusing as a group to state that cuts to funding would mean loss of life."

"The select committee gave a clear signal that it could not call upon the minister to increase funding to metropolitan authorities, if the mets could still make efficiency savings."

"Incredibly, the principal managers then responded to direct questions asking if they had exhausted their opportunities to make more efficiency savings by saying 'No'!

"The answer to the question should

have been an unequivocal 'Yes'. Cuts in our service have already meant a slowdown in attendance times. Even CLG's own research accepted that slower attendance times have increased the number of fire deaths."

The FBU expects the fire minister to cherry-pick their comments to suit the government's agenda of further cuts.

However, the testimony also makes clear that the FBU is the only organised force actually defending the fire and rescue service and opposing all cuts.

It means FBU members will have to do the hard graft campaigning over the next few months, before the Westminster government makes decisions about the next spending round.

The TUC demonstration on 20 October and the FBU's lobby of parliament on 7 November are two national opportunities to put forward the union's case.

The FBU is urging members locally and regionally to make every effort to get the message across to politicians: No more cuts.

IF THERE ARE CUTS, WILL PEOPLE DIE?

Labour MP Simon Danczuk asked the six principal officers whether the worst-case scenario of a 27% cut would cost lives:

Jamie Courtney (South Yorkshire): "I have no way of knowing the answer to that."

Steve McGuirk (Greater Manchester): "That depends on whether we can carry on our safety activities at the same time."

Dan Stephens (Merseyside): "Whether it will cost lives remains to be seen."

Joy Brindle (Tyne and Wear): "It could cost lives ..."

Vijith Randeniya (West Midlands): "People would definitely be at much more risk and our ability to respond in the way we currently do would be severely disrupted. Therefore, those people have an increased chance of losing their life or suffering injury, and therefore, damage to the infrastructure of the country as well."

Martyn Redfearn (West Yorkshire): "Being a blunt Yorkshireman, the answer is yes, but long-term ..."

Quotes from CFOs are from an uncorrected transcript of evidence taken before the Communities and Local Government Committee on 16 July 2012.

IT'S TIME TO TAKE OVER THE BANKS

Economists Michael Roberts and Mick Brooks explain why public ownership is the answer to bank failure



*Former
Barclays chief
executive Bob
Diamond*

OLIVIA HARRIS/REUTERS

The banks have failed. They have triggered a deep recession and made workers poorer. They cannot be allowed to carry on the way they have done in the past. We need a publicly owned finance industry that provides a public service to industry and working people.

Taking over the banks would enable the state to plan investment. Instead of banks gambling with money in financial markets, funds could switch to creating millions of sustainable jobs.

The banks triggered the crisis

The privately owned banking system created a huge credit bubble that burst and triggered the biggest economic slump in the UK for generations.

When the crisis broke, the government took shares in RBS and Lloyds and took over the mortgage lenders Northern Rock and Bradford & Bingley. The taxpayer advanced £133bn of cash to restore the capital of these banks. So far, only £14bn of that original cash outlay has been recovered.

The Westminster government is now imposing increased taxes and cuts in

public services and welfare benefits to make workers pay off the debt.

Not fit for purpose

The privately owned banks are still rigging interest rates, laundering illegal cash, gambling in exotic financial schemes and paying top executives grotesque salaries and bonuses.

Three-quarters of the assets of Barclays bank are invested in trading on the stock, bond and currency markets. Barclays' elite traders and top executives took home £554mn between them to "reward" this gambling.

Banks still engage in outright deceit and law-breaking: Barclays in the recent LIBOR scandal, HSBC which has been accused of laundering Mexican drug money, and Standard Chartered with Iranian banks.

What banks should be for

The privately owned banking system is not doing its job in providing loans on reasonable terms to help the economy recover.

Banks are needed to provide a proper service to firms and households. Most

New York's bank regulator accused Standard Chartered Bank of hiding transactions tied to Iran

World's worst company
BARCLAYS
Banking on hunger

Campaigners outside Barclays bank in London's Canary Wharf

HSBC has been accused of laundering Mexican drug money

workers have their wages paid directly into a bank. We need to be able to access our money. Sometimes we need to be able to borrow money. At other times, we need to save.

In addition, we need banks to raise funds and provide credit to finance investment and growth across an economy. This is what banking as a public service should be about.

The UK big banks dispose of £6 trillion in funds. Yet they earmark just £200bn of this to investment in industry, a measly 3% of the total. Four years after the crisis began, bank lending is falling, not rising.

Is regulation the answer?

Regulation failed to stop banks collapsing and bringing down the economy. More regulation will not work now. It is expensive, bureaucratic and ineffective.

Despite the mess the banks have caused, we are still told we should leave them as they are. But a survey of the period 2002–08 shows that the finance sector paid £203bn in tax, while manufacturing paid nearly twice as much. Tax revenue from the finance sector is less than estimated upfront costs of the bank bail-out of £289bn.

Some argue that the banks should be broken into smaller units so that competition can flourish and the monopoly of the big five can be broken. But the banks are too interconnected: if one goes down, they can all go down like a row of dominos. And the crisis did not start with the big banks. In Britain, it started with the smaller lenders like Northern Rock.

More regulation or a break-up of the banks will not make them operate in the interests of the wider economy. Their main objective will still be to make profits for their shareholders and bonuses for their top executives. That will continue as long as banks are under private ownership.

The public has no control over the banks' decision-making, even in banks that are majority state-owned. Only public ownership of the major banks with a new democratic structure of control can turn banking into a public service.

A publicly owned banking system could finance a mass programme of useful public works, to create jobs and modernise infrastructure.

A publicly owned banking system is vital to economic recovery, providing tax revenue for other public services and to improve living standards.

Better in your pocket than in their coffers

Firefighter reports on the agreement on pay for 2012

The Fire Brigades Union has reached an agreement on pay for 2012, following discussions with fire and rescue service employers through the National Joint Council and consultation with members.

The key points are:

- 1% increase backdated to 1 July 2012 on basic pay for all Grey Book employees;
- the 1% not to apply to CPD payments or national allowances (of which there are few);
- a joint review to conclude by June 2013 looking at pay structures and the pay framework appropriate for the fire and rescue service;
- the review also to consider terms and conditions to ensure they meet the current and future needs and demands of the service and the profession.

While the employers will bring matters to the table, members will be aware of the FBU's conference policies that we would take into such a review;

- a review on the level of National Joint Council (NJC) mileage rates. This is to be evidenced by robust and objective data.

Executive council view

The FBU's executive council has met several times to discuss the situation on pay.

General secretary Matt Wrack said: "The executive council do not believe that this is a generous offer. It does not meet the aspirations of the executive council or FBU members. Nor does it reflect the value of firefighters. Firefighters deserve better.

"However, the executive council would prefer any money available to be in the pockets of FBU members and their families than in the reserves of UK fire and rescue authorities.

"The executive council has considered all the facts that are available. It has considered the status of pay increases in the public sector, particularly in other branches of local government,

and the political and industrial position of the trade union movement at the present time.

"The executive council noted with regret that our colleagues in local government in England and Wales have already had a third year of pay freeze imposed. The executive council also took note of the possibility of the need for industrial action on pensions in the near future depending on progress in those discussions.

"This settlement is far from satisfactory but we are aware that some among our employers were working to ensure that even this limited offer was not made. They wanted a third year of pay freeze as they have already imposed elsewhere in local government."

Firefighters deserve more

FBU negotiators stressed that firefighters continue to carry out their highly skilled duties to an exceptionally high standard and that productivity has increased dramatically as a consequence



GEOFF GRANDFIELD

of cuts to the workforce and the performance of additional tasks and duties over recent years. Equally the FBU has emphasised that firefighters have already experienced two years of a pay freeze.

The union also made it clear that there is a very real threat of hiked increases in already high employee pension contributions. This is on top of the increases already imposed on most FBU members from April this year.

The employers have made the case that fire and rescue authorities have little or no money and have pointed to the background of the wider economic situation and that the central government financial settlements are due to be announced in the late autumn, with further cuts expected.

Consultation

In order to reach an agreement if the employers were to make this into an offer, the executive council wanted to know the views of members.

The union's executive council recommended to members to accept the offer. It was mindful that the employers' alternative to a settlement may be to not make a pay offer for 2012.

The FBU carried out a postal ballot of members in late August-early September to hear members' views. Members voted by almost four to one (78%) to accept the employers' offer.

Until August, the employers had not made an offer in response to the FBU's pay submission and appeared ready to impose a further pay freeze. They then wanted the FBU to accept an offer without allowing the union to consult its members. This was completely unacceptable to our democratic union.

The FBU's executive council is conscious of the statement on pay agreed by FBU conference in June which concluded:

"The executive council recommends to conference that we seek to resolve pay for the short term and for the longer term through discussions with the employers at the NJC.

"The FBU remains committed to seeking agreement through dialogue and negotiation. However, should such an approach not achieve an acceptable pay rise by 1 July 2012 then as part of our strategy the union will commence a membership campaign preparing for national strike action at the appropriate time."

The agreement was reached on 12 September and is contained in NJC circulars 05/12 and 06/12. These are available on the FBU website.

'This settlement is far from satisfactory, but some employers wanted a third year of pay freeze'

CANCER

We need a workers' inquiry

'The HSE has been in denial about work cancer for over three decades'

The Health and Safety Executive must stop dithering on workplace cancer and a workers' inquiry is needed to eliminate exposure to carcinogens, say unions and safety campaigners.

The Fire Brigades Union is unhappy with the approach taken in the Health and Safety Executive's *Occupational cancer, priorities for future intervention – supplementary paper*, published in August.

National officer Paul Woolstenholmes said the report fails to acknowledge the scale of cancer caused by work. He added that firefighters are exposed to a wide range of hazards at work. "Government and employers have a duty to tackle work-related cancers to protect firefighters and other workers," he said.

The HSE report estimates that work-related cancers kill 8,000 people (5% of all cancers) and affect a further 14,000. But the Hazards campaign says that there are 18,000 deaths and over 30,000 cases of cancer related to work each year in the UK (12% of all cancers).

The campaign's Hilda Palmer said the HSE paper was based on "a fairy tale unrealistic view of the world of work today" and

ignored many known carcinogens. It showed little interest in finding unknown exposures, underestimated the numbers of workers exposed and showed no sense of urgency to tackle this massive but preventable workplace epidemic. "Because of the lack of action now, more people will develop occupational cancers and die from them in the future," she said.

HSE in denial

Unions and campaigners argue that the HSE's approach is misguided.

Simon Pickvance, an occupational cancer researcher, warns: "The HSE has been in denial about work cancer for over three decades, depending far too heavily on epidemiology which is only capable of seeing widespread, long-established problems amongst large numbers of workers, employed for long periods of time, in large workplaces such as mines, mills and manufacturing. This is totally unsuitable for today's, smaller and fast evolving workplaces with more complex and diverse exposures.

It is incapable of picking up high-risk exposures affecting smaller groups of workers.

"The HSE's target organ approach is also very damaging as most carcinogens have a very broad spectrum but epidemiology is not clever enough to see it. Real life workers' bodies do not play by epidemiologists' rules so that even quite large increases in common cancers are entirely and irretrievably invisible to traditional epidemiological number-crunching."

Workers' inquiry

The Hazards campaign is calling for a workers' inquiry, with wide backing from the trade union movement.

Paul Woolstenholmes said: "What is needed is a picture of the risks we face in the jobs we do today via a trade union backed workers' inquiry to identify all workplace cancer exposures. The inquiry needs to involve workers in mounting an all-out search for carcinogens at work. It must identify high-risk groups within occupations/workplaces; and look at case studies, industrial hygiene and toxicological studies.

"We also need a massive preventive and proactive enforcement of elimination, and an abandonment of the use of cost-benefit analysis in setting exposure limit for carcinogens, as there are no safe levels of exposure to carcinogens."

➤ HSE supplementary paper on occupational cancer: *Occupational cancer, priorities for future intervention – supplementary paper*
<http://tinyurl.com/9rla4pp>



GETTY IMAGES

Legal Beagle

I'm pregnant and they want to get rid of me

**FBU
FREEPHONE
LEGAL ADVICE
LINE
0808
100 6061**

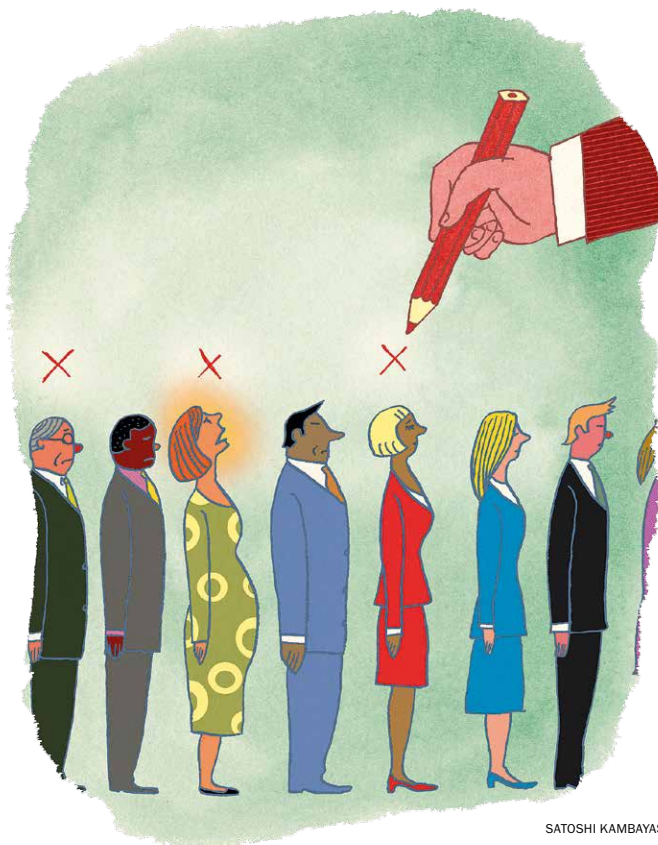
Q How long do you have to be employed by your employer to bring a claim for discrimination under the Equality Act?

A There is no qualification period. A right to bring a claim for discrimination applies from day one of employment. The right also applies to workers who are contracted personally to do work for the employer, including agency workers and, in some cases, the self-employed. Applicants for posts are also protected from being discriminated against by an employer in the arrangements made to determine who should be offered a job. However, it should be noted that an applicant for a job who has no interest in accepting the post, even if it was offered, has no claim for discrimination if they are unsuccessful.

Q I am pregnant and on maternity leave and have just been informed that I have been selected for redundancy along with colleagues. Have I suffered discrimination?

A You will need to get advice from your FBU rep, but if you have been included in a group who have also been made redundant, then it may be difficult to establish that the reason you have been selected is because of your pregnancy.

Where an employer makes all those in a particular section or department redundant and one of those employees is pregnant, that employee is



SATOSHI KAMBAYASHI

unlikely to succeed in a claim of pregnancy discrimination.

However, if it is the case that there is suitable alternative employment and the pregnant employee has not been considered for the suitable alternative post, it may be possible to argue that the employer has failed to comply with its obligations under Regulation 10 of the Maternity and Parental Leave Regulations 1999.

In particular, Regulation 10 requires an employer to consider a pregnant employee over and above other employees where there is a suitable alternative post. This effectively puts pregnant employees at the top of the pecking order when it comes to being considered for suitable alternative posts.

Q How soon must someone lodge a discrimination claim with an employment tribunal after the act of discrimination has taken place?

A A claim must be lodged no more than three months less one day from the act of discrimination. This is known as the limitation period. Where there is a continuing series of discriminatory acts, then limitation runs from the date of the last act. In a case where the employer has failed to make a reasonable adjustment under the Disability Discrimination Act, the time limit runs from when it would have been reasonable for the employer to have made the adjustment.

So, for example, in a case

where a disabled worker is dismissed on grounds of capability for absence related to their disability, the time limit for bringing a claim for discrimination because the employer failed to make a reasonable adjustment will be before the date of dismissal.

Q What rights do trade union safety reps have to time off work to carry out their duties?

A Regulation 4(2) of the Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations 1977 (SRSC) provides that an employer has to permit a safety representative to take such time off with pay necessary to perform their functions and undergo such training as is reasonable.

Safety representatives are entitled to time off for tasks including:

- investigating hazards;
- examining the causes of accidents;
- investigating employees' complaints;
- making representations to employers over safety matters;
- representing employees in consultation with Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspectors;
- receiving information from HSE inspectors;
- attending safety committee meetings;
- inspecting the workplace;
- carrying out inspections following notifiable accidents.

Safety representatives also have a right to a reasonable amount of time off to attend training approved by the HSE.

The buzz is really building

Belfast hosts the World Police and Fire Games in 2013.

We meet two local firefighters who plan to do well in them



Glyn O'Brien has been riding bikes since he was five and was a professional cyclist for eight years before joining the fire service

World Police and Fire Games

With the glories of the 2012 London Olympics still fresh in the mind, Northern Ireland firefighters are preparing to welcome emergency service athletes from around the world next year when Belfast hosts the World Police and Fire Games (WPFPG).

Powerlifter Brian Coombes and cyclist Glyn O'Brien are two FBU members and elite sportsmen from the region relishing the chance to compete – and promote their chosen sports.

Brian Coombes, green watch crew commander from Whitla station, started weight training at 14, but only took up powerlifting in 2007.

News that the World Firefighters Games were to be held in Liverpool the following year acted as a spur to get focused and get training. "I got in contact with my local powerlifting club and began to train for the event," says Brian. And the County Antrim strongman has not looked back.

Within a year, he had won a clutch of titles. In 2008, he emerged as champion at the first contest he entered, not only winning his class, but setting a new national record at the Northern Ireland powerlifting championships. Later in the year he was named powerlifting champion at the World Firefighters Games in Liverpool – the event that inspired his commitment to lifting.

New world games record

Brian was on the brink of withdrawing before the contest as he was "carrying a shoulder injury". But he went ahead, won gold and set a new world games record. Other major wins include world single lift champion in 2009, the All-Ireland single lift the same year and winning gold at the World Police and Fire Games in New York last year, when he broke the games record in the bench press and deadlift categories.

In May this year, Brian fulfilled "a lifetime goal" when he won gold at the British bench press





championships – the first person ever from Northern Ireland to achieve a British title.

Brian, 36, is thrilled the games are coming to Belfast and is a passionate advocate for his chosen sport. He is treasurer of the newly flourishing Northern Ireland Powerlifting Federation (NIPF) – membership has rocketed from eight to over 100 in the past nine months, with women and junior members among scores of new recruits.

Brian, a senior committee member of NIPF, is leading a development plan, inspired by the Paralympics, to encourage local disabled people who want to get involved in the sport.

“I am organising an open day for disabled athletes, with the support of Disability Sport NI and my local council to come and try powerlifting in County Antrim later this year.” Find NIPF at www.niwl.webs.com

Glyn O’Brien, crew member of bravo watch in Armagh, has been riding bikes since he was five and was a professional cyclist for eight years before joining the fire service. “I travelled round on the World Cup circuit and lived out of a bag for seven months of the year,” he says. “Cycling is a huge part of my life. When I’m not a firefighter, I’m a mountain biker and cyclist.”

Glyn organises coaching and guiding on mountain bikes when he is not fighting fires. His passion and expertise is being put to good use in the run-up to the WPFG: he has helped advise on the design of the new bike trail in Kilbroney Park, 35 miles south of Belfast. “It’s brilliant for local people – a £1.6m project made up of a 25k trail and two downhill tracks. The games acted as a bit of a spur and it should help boost tourism too. It should open in the spring.”

Two gold medals

Glyn, like Brian, has far too many awards to list. But coming third in the legendary invitation-only Red Bull Rampage near Zion National Park in Utah must count as a highlight in his career as a pro. Think extreme sport on wheels and you’ll get the picture. “I was chuffed to bits about that. You are judged on style not time.”

Glyn picked up two gold medals in the WPFG in Vancouver in 2009 – one for downhill mountain biking, one for the dual slalom. Not bad for a first timer.

He missed out on attending the New York WPFG last year – he was too busy – but is all set for Belfast 2013.

“It’s brilliant having the games on our own turf. The buzz is really building and we are promoting them as ‘the friendly games’. The hope is that more people in the area will get active and take up sports, as well as enjoying watching them.” And winning gold when you’re playing host to the games would be pretty sweet too.



Both Glyn, above, and Brian, below, have too many awards to list



Brian Coombes, a senior committee member of Northern Ireland Powerlifting Federation, is leading a development plan, inspired by the Paralympics, to encourage local disabled people who want to get involved in the sport

WPFG BELFAST 2013

Belfast is hosting the World Police and Fire Games next summer from 1 to 10 August. About 25,000 visitors, including 10,000 competitors from around 70 countries are expected. Athletes will compete in 66 sports at 41 venues across Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland region of the FBU hopes many firefighters from across the UK will visit “what will be the friendliest games ever. Everyone is assured a warm Irish welcome”.

www.2013wpfg.com

Prize quiz

Win a firefighter statue, kindly donated by 999 Statues (www.999statues.co.uk) who give a percentage of all sales to the Children's Ward, Antrim Area Hospital. The statue has a brass plate which can be personalised with a message.

WIN!



HOW TO ENTER

To win the firefighter statue please send your answers by 31 October 2012 on a postcard to: Prize Competition (October 2012), FBU Head Office, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT2 7AE. Please include your name, address and membership number. The winner will be selected at random from all correct entries.

1 Which of the following fruits is generally associated with autumn?

- A) Pumpkin
- B) Cherries
- C) Strawberries
- D) Peaches

4 Since 1965, on the second Sunday in October, the World Conker Championships have been hosted in which English county?

- A) Shropshire
- B) Staffordshire
- C) Lincolnshire
- D) Northamptonshire

5 Originally a 1945 French song "Les Feuilles Mortes", "Autumn Leaves", sung by many artists, became a US number 1 hit in 1955 for whom?

- A) Eva Cassidy
- B) Frank Sinatra
- C) Ella Fitzgerald
- D) Roger Williams

2 What image of nature is most associated with autumn?

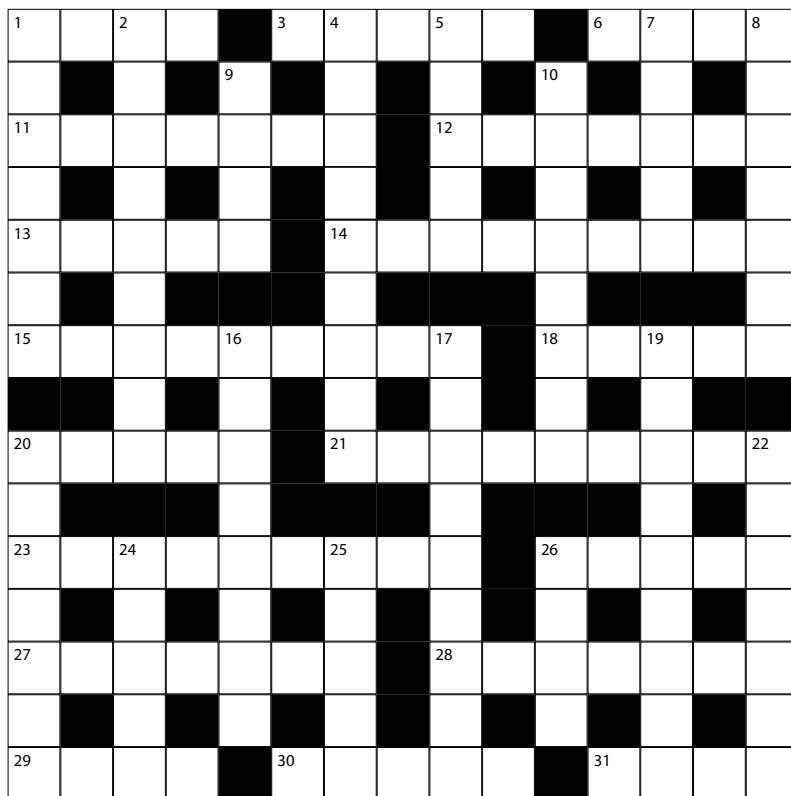
- A) Baby chicks
- B) Multi-coloured leaves
- C) Snowdrops
- D) Late sunsets

3 What language does the word "autumn" come from?

- A) German
- B) Italian
- C) French
- D) Arabic



PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK



CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1 Permanent mark of wound (4)
- 3, 18 Fourth emergency service? (10)
- 6 Fifty per cent (4)
- 11 Hug; include; engage with (7)
- 12 Very cold lettuce? (7)
- 13 Fellow emergency service – in Scotland? (5)
- 14 One who watches – a magazine? (9)
- 15 Unsafe (9)
- 18 See 3
- 20 Ungulate bred for meat and wool (5)
- 21 Hairy spider (9)
- 23 The one it's sent to (9)
- 26 Gnashers (5)
- 27 In need of liquid sustenance (7)
- 28 Place of study (7)
- 29 Depend – as firefighters do upon each other (4)
- 30 Facial hair (5)
- 31 Small abscess on eyelid – sounds like a pig might live in it! (4)

DOWN

- 1 Raised one foot and put in front of the other (7)
- 2 Fellow emergency service (9)
- 4 Go too far, miss one's slot (9)
- 5 Parisian river (5)
- 7 Spy; representative (5)
- 8 Worked out, in an American sort of way (7)
- 9 Bonkers nocturnal flying mammals? (4)
- 10 Five-sided figure – in Washington? (8)
- 16 Fast coffee, Italian style (8)
- 17 American-style tram – named Desire? (9)
- 19 Something that keeps one entertained (in an arcade, perhaps) (9)
- 20 First course – or one who fires the gun (7)
- 22 One who runs when prompted by 20 (7)
- 24 Boring tool (5)
- 25 Internet telephone or conferencing tool (5)
- 26 Story (4)

Last month's answers and winners



Crossword solution August/September

August/September quiz answers

1. D – Tornado
2. A – Humidity
3. C – The Gulf Stream
4. A – Knot
5. B – Trade Winds

Winner of the June/July quiz
Andy Smith, Buckinghamshire

Station Cat

Baronet buys all London fire engines for £2

Sold to Sir Aubrey

So who now owns London's fleet of fire engines? Why, Sir Aubrey Thomas Brocklebank, 6th Baronet Brocklebank, of Greenlands and Irton Hall, Cumberland, naturally. He bought them for £2 from AssetCo, the troubled company to which London Fire Brigade bosses handed the contract to own and maintain them. Sir Aubrey's £2 also bought him an income stream worth nearly £200m over the next ten years.

Sir Aubrey, we learn from investigative journalist David Hencke, is the scion of a famous and powerful shipping family who owned two stately homes. One, Nunsmere Hall in Cheshire was built for his namesake, the third baronet, who went on to join the board of Cunard, and drew up plans for the original Queen Mary in the 1920s. The family had a steam locomotive on the narrow gauge Ravenglass and Eskdale railway named after them.

But Eton-educated Sir Aubrey has fallen on hard times. Gone are the two stately homes – both are now hotels. And Sir Aubrey is on the electoral register at a £162,500 three-bedroom semi in Stanwick, Wellingborough, Northants. He doesn't own his house outright – he has a mortgage with the Nationwide building society.

He has set up a small private company, AB&A Investments Ltd, which is now the owner of London's fire engines.

He has since set up another company, Premier Fireserve Ltd, based at the leased maintenance plant owned by the fire brigade.

He is non-executive chair of a series of venture capital funds, under the name Puma, that invest in anything from hotels and property to anti-quarian books – and then liquidate their investments after five years to secure maximum tax relief and returns for their investors.

● The full story is at <http://davidhencke.wordpress.com/>.

Old Ship on the rocks

Your Cat thought of Sir Aubrey when she travelled to Brighton for the Trades Union Congress and stayed with the FBU delegation in the once splendid Old Ship Hotel. The place has clearly fallen on hard times. Perhaps its new owners have not looked after it properly. Who are they? Apparently they're a company called Puma. Has the curse of Sir Aubrey Thomas Brocklebank fallen on the Old Ship as well?

Coleman to reveal all – in a book

Still, let Londoners be thankful for small mercies. Citizens of north London are to be spared the sight of Brian Coleman walking naked through the streets. He promised to do just that if the Olympics were delivered on budget. It was perhaps the first time that he has been right about anything: the Olympics were not delivered on budget. At the

time this was considered bad news. It is only now that we can reveal the silver lining.

Mr Coleman, who was unseated after a 12-year spell on the London Assembly by Labour's Andrew Dismore in May, instead plans to reveal in a new book how London Mayor Boris Johnson has "margin-alised" all other members of the assembly, according to the *Camden New Journal*.

On the wrong track

Norman Lamont told BBC television's *Question Time* listeners that the railways are much better now than they were before John Major's government, in which Lamont was chancellor, privatised them.

The day after Lamont's appearance, your Cat had occasion to travel to Birmingham on the 9.03 from Euston. When 9.15 came and the train had gone nowhere, we were at last told that the locking mechanism on the driver's door needed fixing.

Should we run off and get the 9.23, someone asked? No, it was being fixed. By the time they admitted they couldn't fix it, the 9.23 had gone.

We were decanted onto the 9.43, which we were told was on Platform 5. Fortunately your Cat asked the train manager on Platform 5 and discovered it was the Manchester train. She found the 9.43 on Platform 6. The train manager

on the 9.43 said: "They never tell us anything."

In the bad old days, when they decanted you from a defective train onto another, already overcrowded one, British Rail used to open up first class seats to second class passengers. The first class seats on the 9.43 stayed unused, while we got up close and personal with our fellow travellers in cattle class.

British Rail fares were boringly predictable. Now you can find that the train you're on is run by a different company from the one you bought your ticket from, and be forced to pay again.

British Rail meals were plain, and not too bad. How your Cat dreams of living in a world where no one had heard of the bacon bap! British Rail provided sleeper services from London to Scotland and even Manchester.

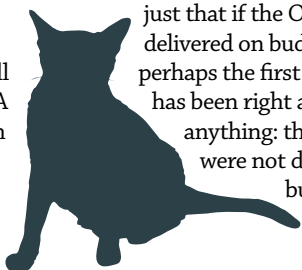
BR wasn't perfect. But since Major and Lamont botched their privatisation, the railways have got steadily worse.

Nunsmere Hall, on its own island, used to be the home of the Brocklebanks – now it's a hotel

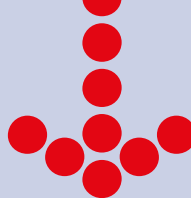


British Rail 1977. And not a bacon bap in sight

PA PHOTOS/AP/PETER KEMP



25-year badges



Ian Fenton (centre, r), red watch, Elland, West Yorkshire, receives his 25-year badge from division secretary Kieran Armstrong. Looking on (l to r): Dave Land, Dave Boothroyd and Gary Butcher.



Keith Smith (centre, l), blue watch, Kirkdale branch, Merseyside (since retired) receives his 25-year badge from branch chair Steve Cummins with Kirkdale branch members looking on



Nigel Morley (r), red watch, Stroud, Gloucestershire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Mike Tully



Andy Wasiuk (l), and Dave Plack (r), Wrexham, North Wales, receive their 25-year badges from branch secretary Richie Clutton



Sue Drinkwater (l), blue watch, Gloucestershire control, receives her 25-year badge from brigade secretary Mike Tully



Richie Everall (l, centre), Wrexham, North Wales, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Richie Clutton and white watch colleagues



Kev Edwards (l, centre), blue watch, Wrexham, receives his 25-year badge from North Wales FBU vice-chair Mike Davies and blue watch colleagues



Steve Bateman (l), Gloucester, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Mike Tully



Neil McKay (l), Tayside training, receives his 25-year badge from acting chair Brian Tevan



Bob Boath (l), Kinross, Tayside, receives his 25-year badge from acting chair Brian Tevan



Richard Chave (r, centre), white watch, Christchurch, Dorset, receives his 25-year badge from membership secretary Scott Blandford. Looking on (l-r) Martyn Rudd, Martyn Rowland, John Pattison, Ian McPhail, Neil Werrey-Easterbrook and Matt Kiddell



Al Machon (l) red watch, Mansfield Road, South Yorkshire, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Mark Wild with colleagues looking on

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Change of address or next of kin

Advise your Brigade Organiser of any change of address and Head Office of changes to next of kin or nominations for benefits.

FBU FREEPHONE LEGAL ADVICE LINE 0808 100 6061

The line provides advice for personal injury, family law, wills, conveyancing, personal finance and consumer issues.

For disciplinary and employment-related queries contact your local FBU representative.